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AUTHOR Tipton, Robert L.
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ABSTRACT

Bilingual, bicultural instruction is not an attempt to change the language or the culture of students. It is designed to develop behavior patterns which are acceptable in the context of more than one cultural environment. Recognizing that all cultures are equally valid, it is essential that teachers prevent one language and culture from dominating the other in the classroom. There must be no attempt to force Anglo-Saxon Protestant mores and language upon individuals from other groups. Knowledge must be presented in reference to more than one cultural framework; behavior must be judged by more than one ethnic system. (EE)

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A Speech by

Robert L. Tipton

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PROBLEMS OF CROSS-CULTURAL COMMUNICATION IN DEVELOPING BILINGUAL BICULTURAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS

When one develops educational programs, he acts upon certain assumptions or presuppositions. These include suppositions about the culture, society, intelligence and previous training of the prospective administrator, teacher and student. The program writer is guided by his understanding of the philosophy, aims, and methods of education. He is limited by his background, training, imagination and editor. Upon this rather amorphous complex rests the validity of the educational program.

In discussing problems of cross-cultural communication in developing bilingual bicultural educational programs, some of the assumptions need not be defined. The writer must have training for program development, must understand the process of communication, and must be aware of the demands of the cultures involved. The prospective administrator and teacher must understand the cultures represented in the program to prepare to teach planned content to the student. They should speak the students' languages and act

acceptably within the framework of the students' cultures. In short, the bilingual bicultural program demands intelligent, sympathetic, highly trained personnel.

Other assumptions must be discussed. These include definitions of bilingual bicultural education and the cultural environment of the program.

BILINGUAL EDUCATION

The aims of education are to communicate knowledge and to modify behavior. To be justified, everything in the educational process must contribute directly to one or both of these aims.

Bilingual education is the communication of knowledge in more than one language. This presupposes that qualified teachers will be used to teach in each language and that all the students will learn the languages of instruction.

Many so-called bilingual programs fail in one or more of the following points: the teachers are not qualified to teach in both languages, the program itself is an ethnically segregated program designed to teach English, and materials are not related to the students' culture. These failures mean that the designation "bilingual" is misleading and false. Much of the criticism levelled at bilingual education justly applies to these programs. Bilingual education has rarely been practiced in the past quarter century in the United States. Perhaps Coral Way is the

best example of truly bilingual education in the nation--and in this case classes are taught in English by qualified American teachers and in Spanish by qualified Cuban teachers. The problems of staffing must be solved--either by requiring the individual teacher to become an acceptable language and cultural model in both languages and cultures, or by team teaching as in Coral Way. The aims and methods of bilingual education must be clearly stated and generally understood. Programs must be called what they are. Bilingual education as I am defining it means that all children are taught in more than one language by teachers who are acceptable models in the language of instruction and the materials are related to the students' cultures.

While bilingual education in the United States uses English as one language of instruction, the bilingual system is not designed solely as an English as second language approach. To reduce it to this is dangerously shortsighted:
First: there is no reason to believe that children in a bilingual program will learn more or better English than children in a monolingual system.
Second: many factors totally unrelated to the school encourage or inhibit the learning and use of English so educational methodology alone is no guarantee of success.
Third: there is no reason to suppose that any real advantage accruing to one group of students from the bilingual program will not accrue to all students.

One of the major arguments for bilingual education is its meeting the child in his own language. The trauma of entering a totally foreign environment and the resulting pattern of failure seem to contribute to the drop-out rate. The changing attitudes toward the use of Spanish in the schools and the initiation of special programs in which Spanish is used contribute to the rise in average educational attainment among Spanish-surnamed students in Texas. While there is no proof that bilingual education itself causes a decrease in the drop-out rate, many who have observed the students over the past few years see a difference in the students' attitudes. They attribute much of this change to the fact that the children entering school are met by teachers who speak their language. The recognition of the value of their language and culture help them develop the positive self-image necessary to success in school.

Bilingual education, however, is no panacea. It is not NECESSARILY superior to any other well-formulated, honestly utilized approach. Concern for the student and honest endeavor to teach him are more important than the tricks of some current fad in educational methodology. When ill-conceived, hastily written, experimental projects which are called "bilingual" are compared with standard curricula over a period of years, their inferior design is apparent. When well-founded, carefully formulated curricula are

compared, the real differences in their results may be traced to three sources: the materials taught, the teachers, and the educational environment created in the schools. Good teachers teach; poor teachers pretend to teach. The effective bilingual program is superior to the effective monolingual program in its having taught the student more than one language.

Unfortunately, the term "bilingual education" (however it is defined locally) has become a political shibboleth for the vote seeker and power monger. While supporting the concept of bilingual education, I resent the overblown oratory and impossible promises politicians make in its behalf. Bilingual education is essentially an elitest approach to education.

It is elitest in the demands it makes on the teacher. At Pan American University, for example, the program in bilingual bicultural teacher training makes these minimum demands: competence in academic and vulgar English and Spanish, both oral and written; the ability to analyze and explain both cultures; and the ability to act and manipulate situations in both cultures. This is in addition to all regular and some specialized training in professional education.

It is elitest in the demands it makes on the public school student. Every student who successfully completes his education in a bilingual bicultural system must have

fluency enough to compete with native speakers of both languages. He is expected to understand and to feel the conscious and subconscious demands that both cultures make. He should have a truly viable choice of cultural and linguistic environments and life-styles. These demands on the intellect and psyche are the kind which are characteristic of elitest education.

BICULTURAL EDUCATION

Bicultural education demands the relation of knowledge to more than one cultural system. Any successful teaching across language and cultural boundaries requires the integration of particular knowledge and behavior into different constructs or world views. This construct or framework determines our understanding of the world around us. What may seem natural and logical to us is strange and unnatural to others. To be understood by people of a different culture, we must use both their language and their logic.

The teacher must start by recognizing the truth enunciated by a poster in the new museum of anthropology in Mexico City: "All men resolve the same needs with different resources and in different ways. All cultures are equally valid." In the classroom, one world view must not take precedence over another. The divisions of nature made by one culture and language are not to be preferred to those made by another culture and language. Perhaps this

is the most important point to make concerning bicultural education.

Bicultural education is not a panacea. It is not designed for mediocrity, but for the elite. It is designed to humanize rather than to nationalize. It is a modern throwback to the education that produced the broad humanism of the Renaissance which made possible the great authors whose perception of man transcends national, and sometimes major cultural, bounds. It is the attitude that made it possible for Shakespeare to put a great speech affirming the essential unity of mankind in the mouth of Shylock, the Jew.

All this may be summarized by saying that bilingual bicultural education is NOT an attempt to change the language or culture of any person. It is rather an attempt to teach all students to act acceptably in the context of more than one language cultural environment. It allows the student a number of truly viable choices; it does not attempt to force any particular choice. Those who attempt either to preserve a "dying" culture or advance a dominant culture err equally in their understanding of truly bilingual bicultural education.

To achieve education's second goal, the modification of behavior, bilingual bicultural programs attempt to develop behavior patterns which are acceptable and interpretable in the cultural environment of the situation

in addition to educating the student toward more logical and intelligent actions. There must be no attempt to force White Anglo-Saxon Protestant (WASP) mores and language upon non-white, non-Anglo-Saxon, non-Protestant groups or individuals.

The surprising conclusion in this definition is that truly bilingual bicultural education is not niggard: all students are expected to understand both the language and the world-view of both cultures represented in the system. Less than this is ethnic prejudice no matter how well disguised. We cannot "raise the minority" and leave the majority unchanged. We must give all students, whether majority or minority, a viable choice among cultures.

CULTURAL ENVIRONMENT

At this point we must recognize that the educational environment is, by its nature, ethnocentric. The communication of knowledge and the inculcation of behavior patterns are achieved through language. No matter what else it may be, the language of instruction is a vehicle for the expression, structure, and enforcement of cultural systems--ethnicity. The monolingual classroom is centered on and limited by the culture of its language. The world view of that language, even its ethnocentric prejudices, are covertly taught to the student. Because most teachers are taught in a monolingual system, most teachers regardless of race or culture are bound by its ethnocentric bias.

Recognizing that all cultures are equally valid, the bilingual bicultural program must be centered on more than one ethnicity. Knowledge must be presented in reference to more than one cultural framework; behavior must be judged by more than one ethnic system. Teachers and students must develop: first, an understanding of the cultures; and second, the ability to think, feel, and act compatibly with the cultural demands.

In monolingual monocultural areas, the school patrons may desire bilingual bicultural education. At best they have the study of foreign languages and cultures. With no supporting extrascholastic framework, children learn language and culture artificially, not experimentally. While I approve and support the adoption of such programs, I am not discussing them in this paper.

The adoption of a bilingual bicultural educational program should be a response to the needs of the community. In areas where two or more cultural groups are firmly established, bicultural education is a minimum requirement for the educational system. The cultures represented may be transmitted by different languages or dialects, but they must be considered equally valid; the languages or dialects are also equally valid. In practice, this means that in South Texas we must accept both Mexican-American and Anglo-American standards; in other areas, we must accept other cultural standards. Note that I said "accept," not

"tolerate." Often "bidialectalism" and "bilingualism" are disguises for ethnocentric prejudice.

DEVELOPMENT PROBLEMS

In the framework of the definition of bilingual bicultural education presented, the specific problems of program development fall into four categories: staff, student, material and method.

The program, I repeat, demands an intelligent, sympathetic, highly-trained staff. Intelligence can not be taught, hence need not be discussed. Sympathy may be developed by experience, but a single prescribed set of educational experiences will not automatically produce sympathy. The training of the staff can be profitably discussed.

Ideally the entire staff will be bilingual and bicultural. Unfortunately the ideal is rarely attained. Instead, the staff itself is balanced and representative of the languages and cultures of the community. The development of the successful program demands that the staff pool its individual talents and expertise to create a unified, unanimously approved program. During the developmental stages, the entire planning group will be communicating across cultural boundaries, learning to understand each other, developing an appreciation for and sympathy with the opposite culture, and adapting to the demands of the bilingual bicultural environment. Similar

experiences must be provided for the whole staff. In practice this is the immediate possibility.

As vital as the development of understanding and good-will is, certain areas of expertise are more important. Experts in language, in language teaching, in the subject areas, in psychology, and in pedagogy are essential. The most common fault in the development of new programs is the faiure to provide the necessary expertise on one committee at one time. Piecemeal development of the program foredooms it. When experts who understand the cultures involved work out a unified program together, the chances for success are greatly increased.

The successful operation of the staff demands the highest, rarest qualities of human nature: understanding, forbearance, objectivity and cooperation. All this starts in unfeigned mutual respect. Friendship and compatibility are wonderful extras, but mutual respect is absolutely requisite.

The reason for needing such expertise blended into the development committee is the student. The purpose of the program is to educate the student. To educate him, to design the program for him, the program writers must understand him and his problems. Although his problems are legion, they fall into two major categories: problems of language and problems of culture.

All students in the program will be learning a second language. The first language will influence the development of the second in all language systems. The student must be taught to perceive the new language sounds according to the new system rather than as the nearest equivalent in his first language. This demands auditory training--so the teacher must use the proper auditory training techniques. The student must learn to produce the new sounds after he has heard them. This demands that he learn a new set of speech habits--so the teacher must develop the proper speech modification techniques. The student must establish new grammatical patterns for the new language. This forces him to accept and use a new organizational logic. He must develop new semantic fields which often conflict with his world-view. The organization and meaning of the new language nuances force the student to accept a new cultural construct--so the teacher must understand both cultural constructs to help the student become bilingual and bicultural with a minimum of trauma.

All the students must learn to manipulate new cultural constructs. Culture is so pervasive that I sometimes suspect that personality is simply a particular reflection of the culture that binds the individual's society together. To the extent that the teacher deals with the student's culture, he deals with the student's being. The successful teacher must deal objectively and

sympathetically with the cultures in the classroom to provide the student, ultimately, a viable choice. The teacher must not encourage a particular choice among different value systems, world-views, customs or roles. If the teacher can meet the cultural demands of his role, the student will learn to appreciate and to manipulate both systems. This is the goal of bilingual bicultural education.

At this point everyone demands a few words about materials. This is a relatively minor problem if all the other problems are resolved. The traditional subjects--reading, writing, arithmetic--are still basic. Of course the language arts will be taught in both languages.

The criteria for the inclusion of other materials must be clearly stated in each program. The fine arts of both cultures should be included; some objective study of the cultures can be presented. History must be presented objectively. We can no longer tolerate a lesson which places the student at Davy Crockett's side while the "cruel Meskins" beseige the Alamo. Incidentally, the Daughters of the Texas Revolution notwithstanding, the flag flown by the Alamo defenders was Mexican and the men were fighting for the rights guaranteed them by the Mexican Constitution. Santa Ana's invasion of Texas was designed to capture the man who most fervently advocated independence--de Zavala. The objective, sympathetic treatment of both cultures dictates the criteria for the selection of materials.

The final set of problems, methodology, is more complicated. Although teaching methods can be determined with minimum concern, disciplinary methods are critical. What do you do, for example, with a teenage Mexican-American boy who breaks a rule? Do you "give him three licks"? How does this affect his ego and his attitude toward you and the school? His mother may have never punished him physically because he is masculine. His father may not have dealt out any corporal punishment since he began to mature. To him, his masculinity is sacrosanct and you threaten it. This is the basis for the multiple masculine sex references when the Chicano feels emasculated by the Anglo society. This is what "machismo" is about. He cannot accept such an insult. What do you do?

Or take the matter of modesty. As a child, the Mexican-American boy probably wore short pants, but when he reaches a certain age, he puts on long pants. He is becoming a man. The P. E. instructor has a real problem getting him to "suit out" in shorts. If the shorts are a team uniform, he wears them. Most of our boys will consistently wear sweat pants in P. E., though. Their ideas of modesty must be respected.

In the final analysis, the administrator and teacher must operate within the cultural construct of the individual student in the selection of methods.

CONCLUSION

If there is one unifying principle among all these problems, it is ethnocentrism. The Archie Bunker AND the liberal do-gooder are equally objectionable because both, like God, attempt to make the student over in their own image. This ethnocentrism must be fought.

Robert L. Tipton
Department of English
Pan American University
Edinburg, Texas 78539